ONE METHOD OF TREATMENT OF LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE

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For a long time much has been written on the different methods used by orthopedic surgeons in their attempt to correct lateral curvature of the spine, but nothing has appeared which has offered any hope of a cure of this most serious condition until recently, when Dr. E. G. Abbott, surgeon-in-chief of the Children's Hospital in Portland, Maine, discovered and presented to the profession a simple, rapid and complete reduction of this deformity.

His method is this: not merely to force the distorted parts of the back to their normal anatomical position, but to place them in an over-corrected position. The principle of this treatment is well known in arboriculture; the nurserymen bend a curved tree until a corresponding bend is produced in the opposite direction, then the trunk is retained in the new position for a time, and when released it becomes straight and remains vertical. So with the spine, Dr. Abbott applies a plaster-of-Paris jacket, which places the patient in the opposite direction from that of the deformity. To do this the patient is bent forward, and lateral traction made, the low shoulder elevated and the depressed ribs pushed backward. In most instances it is impossible to obtain complete over-correction when the corset is applied, but the spine is gradually rotated and bent into this position.

A large window is cut in the back over the depressed ribs, giving room for them to bulge backward as they change their positions. In front another window is cut at one side where large felt pads are inserted from time to time as space offers itself until the spine has bent and rotated the required amount. The changes, although gradual, are constant, and from the position in which the patient is placed in the corset the change could only be toward over-correction.

I think it will be a surprise to the reader to learn that it required but fourteen days to completely over-correct one case of severe fixed lateral curvature, and the usual time necessary to bring about the desired position is only one month.

After the over-correction is obtained, the spine must be held in this position for some time, after which it is released and allowed to grad-

ually fall back to its normal place. After the corset is removed, it is necessary for the patient to take systematic exercises in order that free normal motion may be obtained, and the spinal muscles should be developed by massage.

Patients under the treatment suffer very little, if any, more than they do in the ordinary plaster-of-Paris corsets, such as are worn for tuberculosis of the spine, and in only two instances have patients in the Children's Hospital been given an opiate, and then only during the first twenty-four hours.

Dr. Abbott attributes this deformity to faulty positions assumed through carelessness, occupation or disease. In many instances it is caused by the carrying of books in one hand to and from school. The attitude taken by a child while sitting at a desk favors its development. It may be observed that when a child sits at his desk writing he naturally assumes a position which causes a temporary lateral curvature of the spine. If this posture is frequent the temporary curve becomes habitual and finally fixed, and what was at first a physiological position soon becomes a pathological.

So great has been the interest shown by the medical profession in this treatment of a deformity, the correction of which no one before has solved, that physicians have come from all parts of the country to observe Dr. Abbott's methods. It is seldom that a man working alone, with no ideas but his own to utilize, is so fortunate as to work out the solution of such an important problem, namely, the cure of a most prevalent deformity, lateral curvature of the spine.

A MISSIONARY EDITORIAL

In Lincoln, Nebraska, some time within the past three months, an opera was given for the benefit of a hospital, at which some "sorority" girls intended to act as ushers, dressed in nurses' uniforms. The state association of nurses and the state Red Cross Committee very promptly expostulated against the misuse of the uniform, and published in a newspaper their hearty sympathy with the object of the entertainment, but their disapproval of the plan of the ushers, using as their argument an editorial which appeared in the Journal for December under the heading "Nurses in Uniform in Public Places." It would be interesting to know the result of the protest,—whether it was effectual in inducing the university girls to adopt some other garb.